

news

Star continues ban

TORONTO--The review of the Toronto Star's advertising policy regarding homosexual ads has been completed. It was reported in the last issue of this paper that the Star had refused a promotional ad for the Body Politic despite the Ontario Press Council's decision that the Star's refusal represented discrimination.

In a June 14th meeting with the president of the Star, Beland Honderich, two members of the Body Politic collective and the paper's solicitor, Fred Zemans (Parkdale Community Legal Services), were told that the advertisement would not be accepted. Honderich was frank in giving his reason: last summer's article in the Body Politic entitled "Of men and little boys" by Gerald Hannon renders the Body Politic unacceptable as an advertiser. He readily acknowledged that this was an arbitrary decision of the kind which every newspaper must make and one which, he said, he regretted but nevertheless stood by.

The Star's chief executive offered little hope that Toronto's evening daily would accept the ad in the foreseeable future. When the representatives of the Body Politic mentioned the finding of the Press Council, Mr Honderich expressed surprise that the Council found against the Star and hoped the issue would be brought before the body again, feeling confident that a reconsideration would uphold the Star's position.

Since the Star's refusal, other promotional advertisements for the Body Politic have been submitted to various newspapers throughout the country. More have accepted the ads than not. The Ottawa Citizen, the Owen Sound Sun-Times, the Toronto Sun, the Medicine Hat News, the Vancouver Province, the Winnipeg Tribune, and the Montreal Star are among those which have printed the promo. Among the decliners are the Brantford Expositor, the Hamilton Spectator, the Edmonton Journal, and the London Free Press, with the Toronto Sun changing sides after having published the ad, because of "complaints" from readers.

Gemini II, the publication of Waterloo Universities Gay Liberation Movement, attempted to secure a classified ad with the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. The Record advertising manager said that they would print neither the word 'gay' nor 'homosexual', except cases involving a "plea for help". The Windsor Star, in addition to refusing to print the Body Politic's ad, declined to publicise Windsor Gay Unity's dances. WGU is planning to appeal to the Press Council, as well as taking other political actions.

However a formal complaint submitted by the BP on July 20th to the Ontario Press Council against the Windsor Star was dismissed: Fraser MacDougall, executive secretary for the council, wrote:

"Since the complaint is identical to the one involving the Toronto Star, on which the council issued an adjudication, it does not qualify for consideration in line with Council policy."

The BP immediately replied by noting that the council's constitution says nothing about a policy prohibiting reconsideration of complaints, that each individual case should be considered on its merits, and that the Council "must publicly decry each and every instance of discrimination of which you are aware, and to doubly decry examples of discrimination which continue even after you condemn them..." if the council's stated purpose of encouraging the highest standards of journalism is to be realized. The letter also argued the right of the Windsor Star's readers to know that paper's advertising policy; a council decision would yield such knowledge.

As yet, Mr. MacDougall has not responded. His office indicates he is on holiday.

Gay centre opens

MONTREAL--An open-house here on June 27th occasioned the birth of a Gay Community Centre. The Centre hopes to provide any and all necessary services which may be relevant to the gay community, such as services of a legal or medical nature. The Centre is open daily from 7 to 11 pm, and is located at 3439 St Denis (telephone: 288-1101).

The opening was covered by CBC radio, radio station CKGM, La Presse, The Montreal Star and the Montreal Gazette, with the weekly Sunday Express giving special coverage to the event.

The Centre is open on a drop-in basis, with further social events planned for the future. The motto of the Centre is "Gay is." The philosophy of the Centre is acceptance of homosexuals without hassles.

NO ASSENT

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II does not feel justified in singling out gays 'purely on the basis of the 1969 Omnibus Bill.' She has refused to send congratulations on Gay Pride Week because 'otherwise there could be no end to the various celebrations to which she would be expected to subscribe.'

Crombie rejects Gay Pride Week

TORONTO -- Bryn Lloyd, Mayor David Crombie's Executive Director, informed the Gay Pride Coalition that "Gay Pride Week" could not be officially declared since the policy of the city declaring special days and weeks was under review.

"...until such a time," he said, "as a new policy has been submitted and approved by City Council, I regret we are unable to accede to your request."

GATE lobbies Toronto Council

TORONTO--A lobbying project by Toronto's Gay Alliance Toward Equality is now nearing completion: a request to the Toronto City Council that it prohibit discrimination in municipal employment based on sexual orientation. There are about five thousand workers in the municipal civil service, and so far no anti-homosexual discrimination has come to GATE's attention. Thus, it wants Council to affirm openly what appears to have been an implicit policy.

GATE will submit a brief in early September to the Committee on Urban Renewal, Housing, Fire, and Legislation. It must pass this committee before going on to full Council.

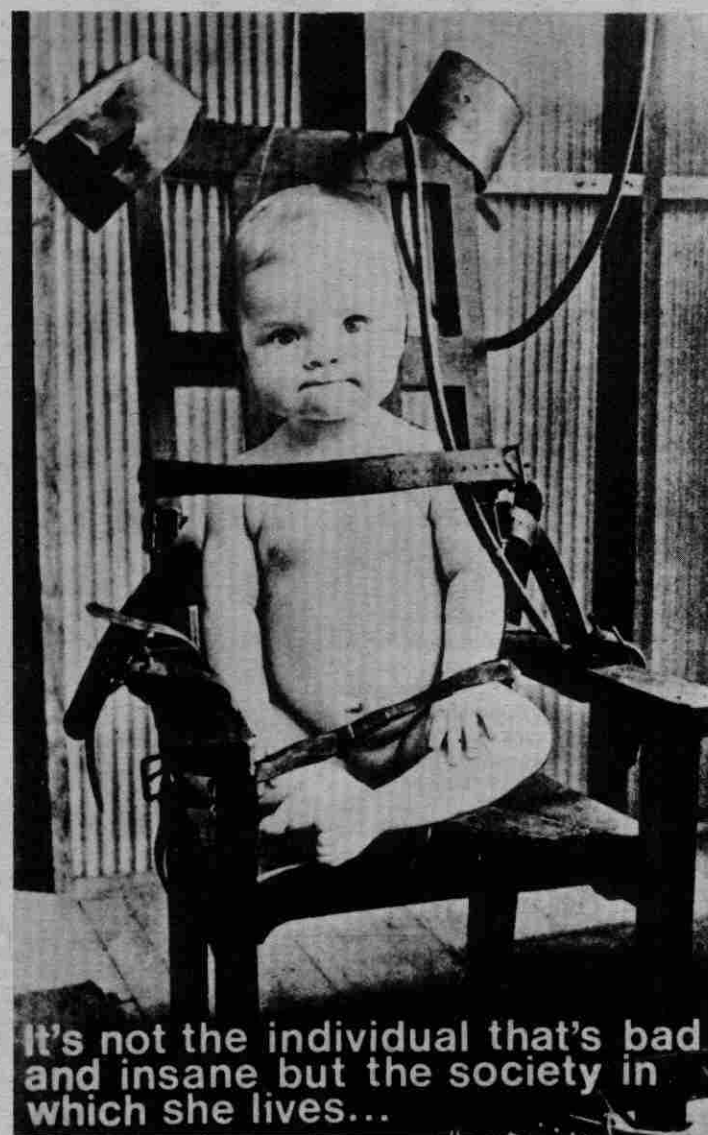
During the summer, GATE delegates have been meeting individually with the 12 alderpersons on this committee. For many of them, this was their first encounter with the organised gay movement. While there has been no outright hostility, a wide range of receptivity has emerged.

One alderperson was very eager to learn about Toronto's gay population. Another offered help in wording the brief and also noted that City Hall has many gay employees. Others seemed evasive or admitted opposition to homosexuality on the grounds of "human construction"--that is, if just doesn't work "that way."

GATE is urging Toronto's gay community to support this important effort by asking their alderpersons to back the brief and by appealing directly to Mayor David Crombie for his support. "Success in this endeavour," a GATE spokesman said, "will augur well for more ambitious proposals which we are planning to bring before the government. We hope that all gay people will give us their backing."

Correction

The president of the University of Saskatchewan Homophile Association is Bev Siller, not Ben as reported in the last issue.



It's not the individual that's bad and insane but the society in which she lives...

Christie Thompson

Cops harry park users

TORONTO--The Metro Toronto Police morality squad has recently changed its tactics, especially in the High Park area. Previously, plain-clothes men would practice entrapment. Now, however, uniformed policemen are patrolling the area asking recreants whether they have been convicted of a sexual offence, usually gross indecency or indecent assault. If the individual questioned responds affirmatively, he is charged with Vagrancy E, a section of the Criminal Code which prohibits persons previously so convicted from using public places of recreation.

It is also noteworthy that when a charge of gross indecency is laid, it is accompanied by a charge of

committing an indecent act. The first of these is an indictable offence, while the second is merely a summary offence, which carries a lighter penalty. The intent is to manoeuvre the accused into pleading guilty to the lesser charge, so that an easy conviction can be obtained. The accused is saddled with a police record which can only be erased after a two-year wait and an investigation by the RCMP.

A charge of gross indecency can be tried in County Court, where an unconditional discharge is usually obtained. But this requires money. Hence, most accused decide to plead guilty to the lesser charge of committing an indecent act.

Unitarians establish gay office

TORONTO--During the week of May 29th to June 3rd, the Unitarian-Universalist Association held its General Assembly at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. Among the 1300 delegates from all over North America was a small but very visible group of members from the UU Gay Caucus, sporting large pink and lavender buttons identifying them as such.

This was an important year because the caucus was able to obtain the support of more than 30 congregations to place on the agenda a resolution calling on the UUA Board to establish an Office of Gay Affairs at denominational headquarters in Boston. Prior to the Assembly, the Board had unanimously recommended the defeat of the resolution.

Opposition came from other quarters as well. Rev Donald Harrington of the large and influential Community Church of New York described homosexuality as a psychological dysfunction similar to kleptomania. Also, the caucus' display table was upended one night and materials were stolen. The hotel security staff refused to take any responsibility.

The 20 or more gay caucus members conducted an intensive personal lobby campaign and gradually won enough delegate support to make passage of the resolution a possibility. However, due to the reluctance of the UUA Board and especially of its chairman, Dr Robert West, an amendment to the resolution was passed which stripped the UUA

of financial responsibility for the OGA. The effect of this amendment was somewhat moderated by a further amendment which committed the UUA to help the gay caucus in seeking funds for the OGA.

During the course of the Assembly, the caucus was aided by the UU Women's Federation, Toronto GATE, and the Body Politic; George Hislop, president of CHAT, participated with UU gays in a television taping.

The gay caucus was encouraged by the fact that it acquired several new members who used the OGA issue to come out and join forces with their sisters and brothers.

The UUA General Assembly meets next year in New York.